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# Latinos in Massachusetts Public Schools: Salem

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# Latinos in Massachusetts Public Schools Salem

by Michael Berardino

April, 2015

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THE MAURICIO GASTÓN INSTITUTE  
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AND PUBLIC POLICY

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# Salem

This report provides a snapshot of current educational outcomes for Latino students in the city of Salem. It is based on publicly available data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MADESE) that have been analyzed for the community by the Gastón Institute. Using the ethno-racial categories assigned by MADESE, the report focuses on demographic trends and the most recent educational outcomes of Latino students relative to other ethno-racial groups in the school district and to students statewide. The report has three sections:

The first section illustrates the demographic shift occurring in the Salem Public Schools. The number of White students in the district has been steadily declining, while the number of Latino students has increased.

The second section compares the performance of Latino students in Salem on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests with the performance of all students statewide and other ethno-racial groups in Salem. This section shows that despite improvements among Latino students – especially on the Grade 10 English Language Arts, and Science/Technology/Engineering tests – disparities persist with White students in Salem.

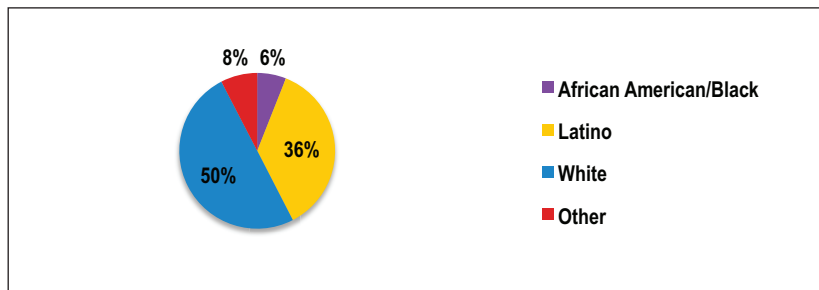
The third section shows Latino graduation, dropout, and college enrollment rates, relative to other students in the district and to all students statewide. Latino students in Salem have a higher graduation rate and lower dropout rate than White students in the district and all students statewide, but enroll in college at a lower rate than these groups.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> While analyzing and presenting the data using MADESE's ethno-racial categories, we use the term "Latino" rather than "Hispanic."

## Demographics

Figure 1. Ethno-Racial Composition of Salem Public Schools, SY2015



Source: MADESE (n.d.). Enrollment Data.

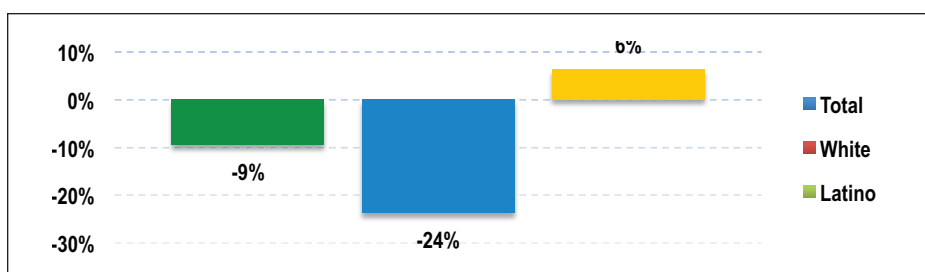
The Salem Public Schools had an enrollment of 4,199 students in SY2015.<sup>2</sup> Three-fifths (60%) of the students are classified as low-income. Twenty-eight percent of students in Salem spoke a language other than English as their first language and 12% are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs), the twenty-second highest proportions among all districts in the state.<sup>3</sup> As seen in Figure 1, Latino students are the second largest student group in the district: the 1,528 Latino students represent 36% of the total enrollment in Salem, the thirteenth highest proportion in the state. White students are the largest ethno-racial group in the district comprising 50% of the students in the district. African-American/Black students comprise 8% of all students and all other ethno-racial groups together account for 6%. As seen in Figure 2 below, from SY2006 to SY2015 the overall number of students in the district decreased by 9% with the number of White students decreasing by 24%. Over this same period, the number of Latino students increased by 6%.

Almost one third (29%) of the Latino students in Salem are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs). While specific information about the ancestry of the Latino students in Salem is not available, the American Community Survey estimates that 48% of Latinos in Salem are of Dominican heritage, 32% of Puerto Rican heritage, 5% of Guatemalan heritage, and the remaining 15% of other Latino heritages (ACS, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> SY refers to the ending year of the school year. For example, SY2014 is the school year that began in September of 2013 and ended in June of 2014.

<sup>3</sup> As compared to all non-charter school districts in Massachusetts.

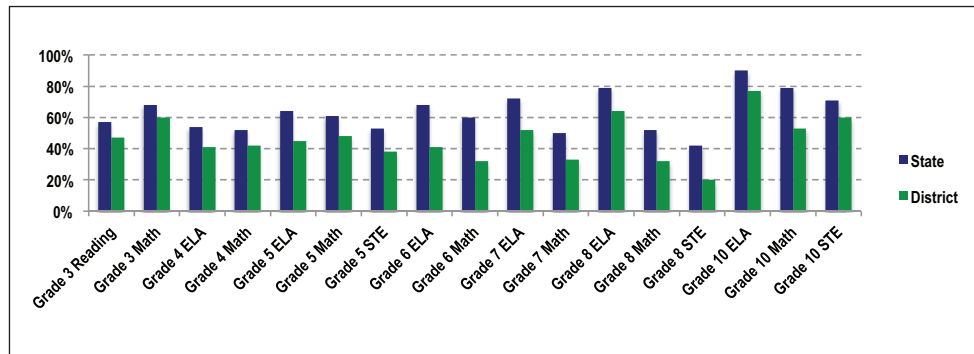
Figure 2: Change in Student Enrollment, Salem Public Schools, SY2006 to SY2015



Source: Author's calculations based on MADESE (n.d.). Enrollment Data.

## II. MCAS Performance

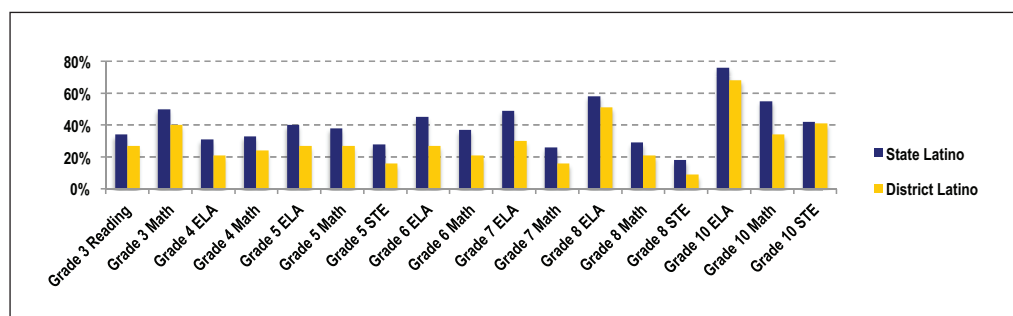
**Figure 3: Percentage of All Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on MCAS Tests by Grade and Subject, SY2014**



Source: MADESE (2014). MCAS Tests of Spring 2014, Percent of Students at Each Achievement Level for Salem.

As evidenced by Figure 3 above, Salem as a district performs below statewide averages on the standardized tests in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Figure 3 shows the percentage of all students in Salem and all students statewide who scored “Proficient” or higher on the 2014 MCAS tests in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science/Technology/Engineering (STE). On all tests across all grades, the proficiency rates in Salem were below statewide rates, with the largest gaps in middle school and high school. Similarly, as seen in the figure below, Latino students in Salem performed below the proficiency rates for Latino students statewide on all MCAS tests, although the gaps are smaller than when comparing all students in Salem to all students statewide.

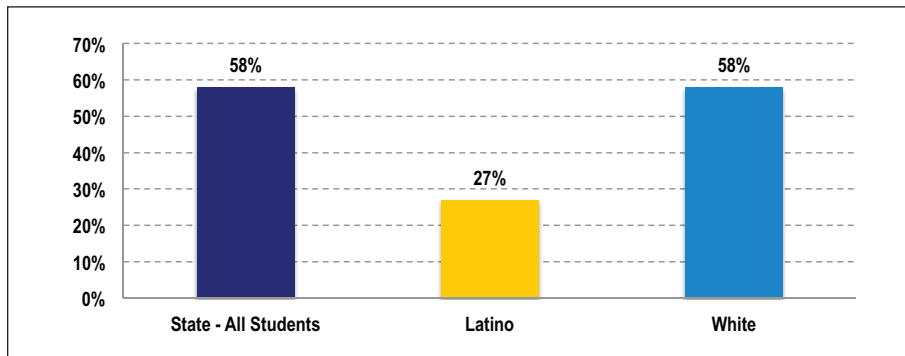
**Figure 4: Percentage of All Latino Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on MCAS Tests by Grade and Subject, SY2014**



Source: MADESE (2014). MCAS Tests of Spring 2014, Percent of Students at Each Achievement Level for Salem.

The following section highlights the performance by Latino students in Salem on the Grade 3 Reading and Grade 10 ELA, Math, and STE tests, all important performance measures. Grade 3 Reading is considered an important measurement for academic preparation, because the end of third grade marks the time when students go from “learning how to read” to “learning from reading.” The Grade 10 MCAS tests are also important as a metric of preparation for participation in post-secondary education. Furthermore, all students in Massachusetts are required to pass the Grade 10 ELA, Math, and STE MCAS tests in order to qualify for a high school diploma. Test results for Latinos in Salem are compared to those for White students in Salem and for all students statewide.

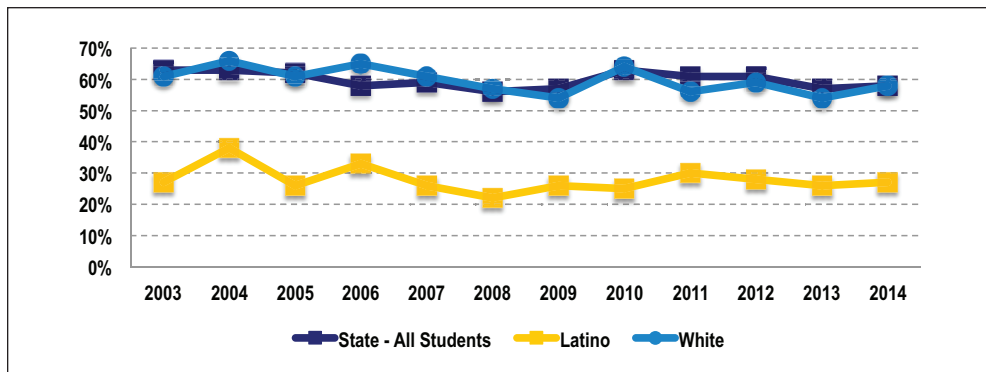
**Figure 5: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 3 Reading MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014**



Source: MADESE (2014). 2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.

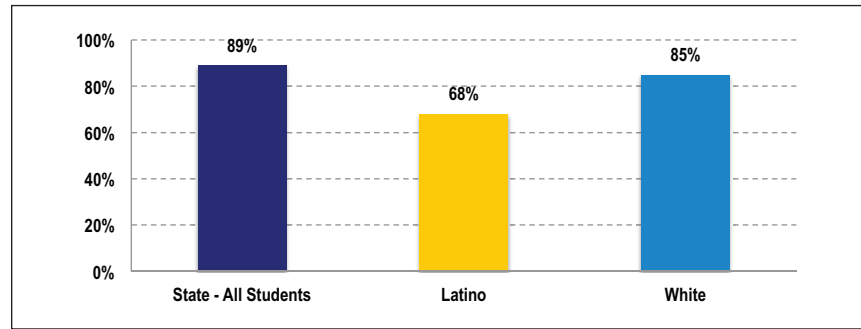
As seen in Figure 5 above, 27% of Latino students in Salem performed at “Proficient” or higher on the Grade 3 Reading MCAS in SY2014. This proficiency rate was 31 percentage points below the rate for White students in Salem and for all students statewide. Figure 6 below illustrates that the proficiency rate for Latino students has not improved since SY2003, beginning and ending at 27%. However, the rates for White students in Salem and all students statewide decreased slightly over this time. As a result, the gap with White students in Salem narrowed by 9% and the gap with all students statewide decreased by 14%.

**Figure 6: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 3 Reading MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2003-SY2014**



Source: MADESE (2014). 2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.

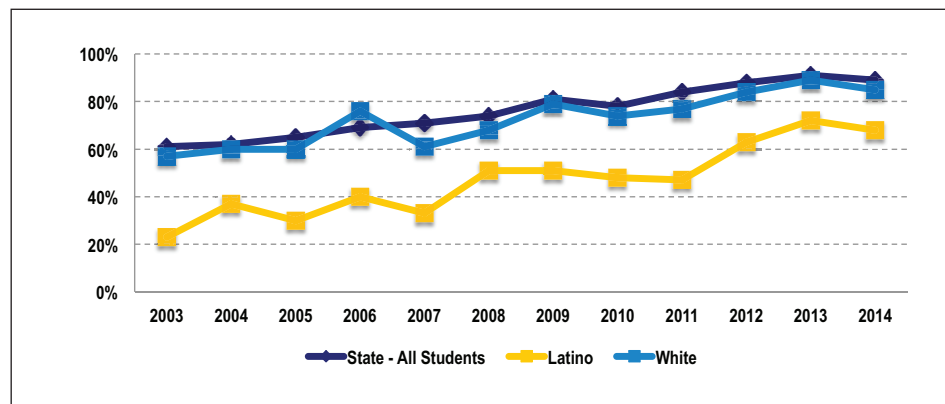
**Figure 7: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 10 ELA MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014**



Source: MADESE (2014). 2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject

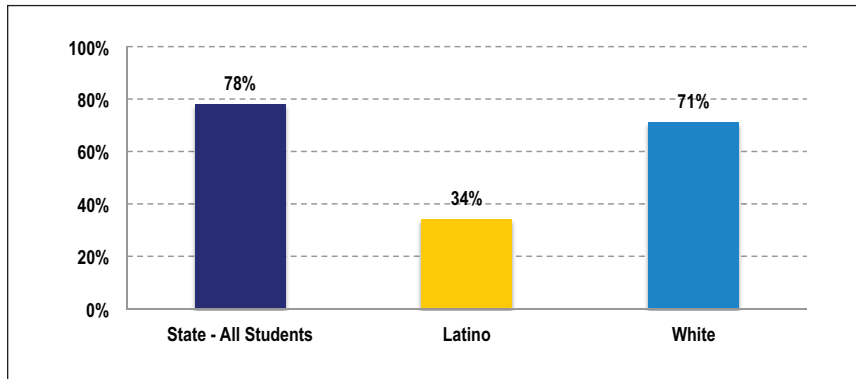
In SY2014, 68% of Latino students in Salem scored “Proficient” or higher on the Grade 10 ELA MCAS test. The pass rate for Latino students in Salem was 17 percentage points lower than the rate for White students in Salem and 21 points below the pass rate statewide. Furthermore, this pass rate was the fifteenth lowest among all Latino subgroups in the state. However, as seen in Figure 8 below, the Latino pass rate in Salem has improved dramatically from the 23% rate in SY2003. From SY2003 to SY2014, Latino students eliminated 50% of the performance gap with White students in Salem and 45% of the gap with all students statewide.

**Figure 8: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 10 ELA MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2003-SY2014**



Source: MADESE (2014). 2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject

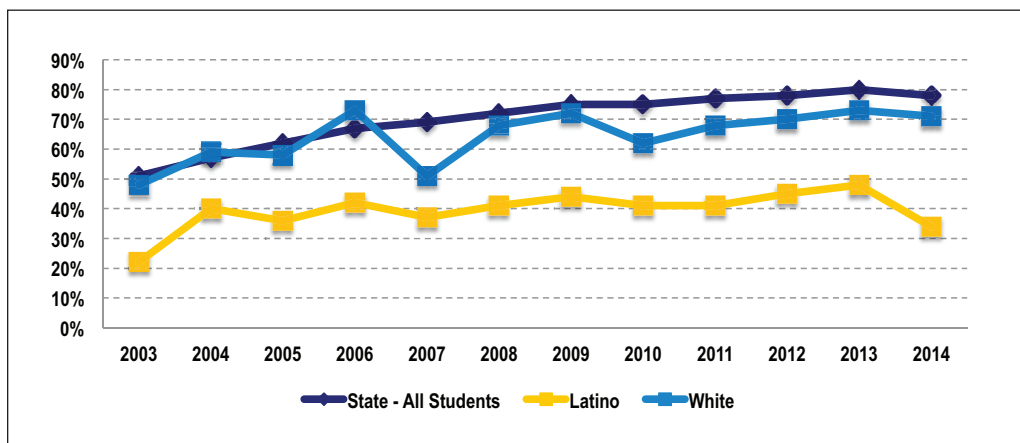
**Figure 9: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 10 Math MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014**



Source: MADESE (2014). 2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.

While 68% of Latino students in Salem passed the Grade 10 ELA test in SY2014, half as many Latino students (34%) passed the Grade 10 Math test. As seen in Figure 9 above, this pass rate was 37 points below the rate for White students in Salem and 44 points below the rate for all students statewide. This pass rate for Latino students in Salem was the eighth lowest pass rate among all Latino subgroups in the state. Figure 10 below demonstrates that, overall, the pass rate for Latino students in Salem has improved since SY2003, but decreased from a high of 48% in SY2013. Since SY2003, the pass rate for White students in Salem and for all students statewide improved at a higher trajectory and as a result, the gap with White students in Salem increased by 42% and the gap with all students statewide increased by 52%.

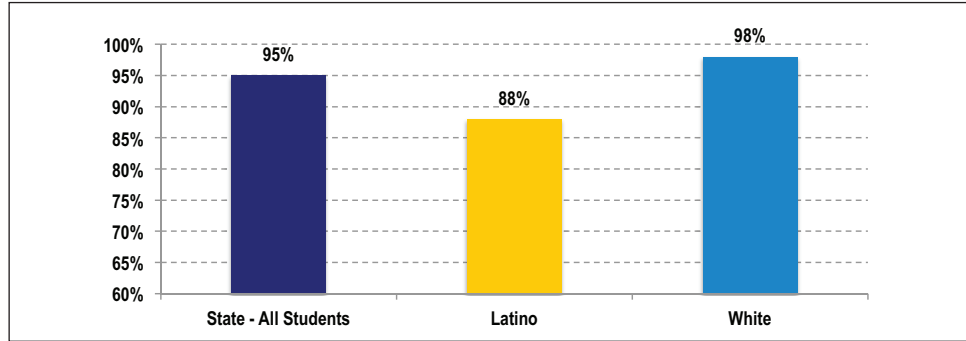
**Figure 10: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 10 Math MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2003-SY2014**



Source: MADESE (2014). 2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.



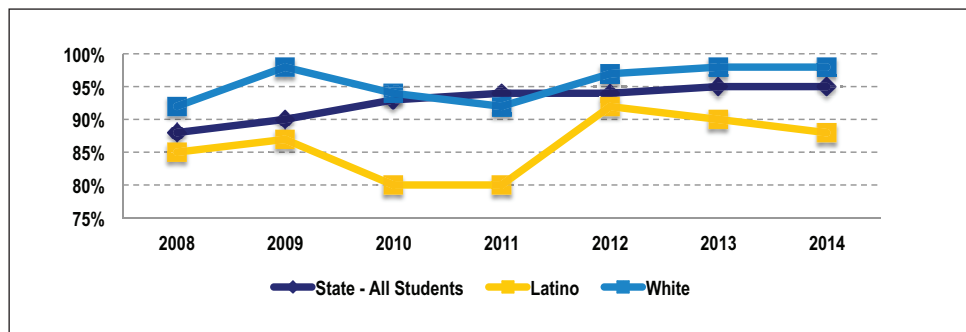
**Figure 11: Percentage of Students Scoring “Needs Improvement” or Higher, Grade 10 STE MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014**



Source: MADESE (2014). 2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.

Figure 11 illustrates that in SY2014, Latino students in Salem had a pass rate of 88% on the Grade 10 Science, Technology, and Engineering MCAS tests (for the STE tests, passing requires a score of “Needs Improvement” or higher). The Latino rate was 10 points below the rate for White students in Salem and 7 points below the rate for all students statewide. Figure 12 below shows that Latino students in Salem made slight progress on the STE tests since their introduction in SY2008, reaching a high of 92% in SY2012 but falling slightly in recent years. Since SY2008, White students in Salem and all students statewide improved at a steeper trajectory, resulting in larger performance gaps.

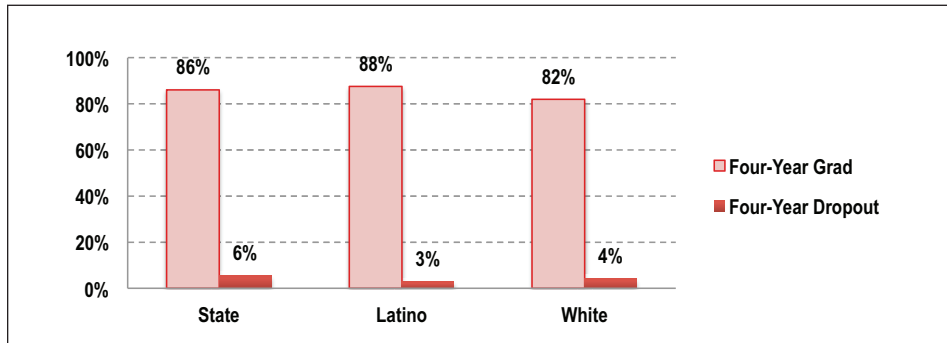
**Figure 12: Percentage of Students Scoring “Needs Improvement” or Higher on Grade 10 STE MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2008-SY2014**



Source: MADESE (2014). 2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.

### III. Graduation Rate, Dropout Rate, and College Enrollment Rate

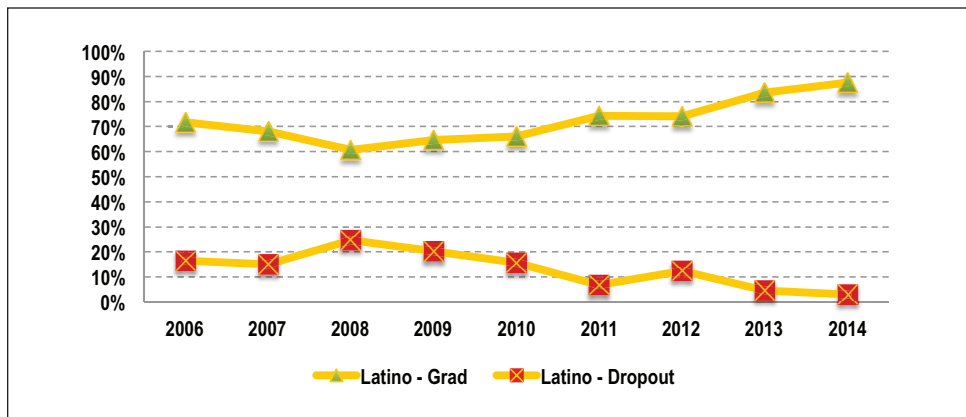
Figure 13: Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



Source: MADESE (n.d.). Cohort 2014 Graduation Rates.

As shown in Figure 13 above, the SY2014 four-year graduation rate for Latino students in Salem was 88% and the dropout rate was 3%, better rates than the graduation rate of 82% and a dropout rate of 4% for White students in Salem and 86% and 6% for all students statewide. The four-year graduation and dropout rates for Latino students in Salem were the third highest Latino cohort rates among all districts with cohorts of at least 100 Latino students. As seen in Figure 14 below, the four-year graduation and dropout rates for Latino students in Salem have improved markedly since SY2006 (and steadily since lows of SY2008), with the graduation rate improving from 72% to 88% and the dropout rate decreasing from 17% to 3%.

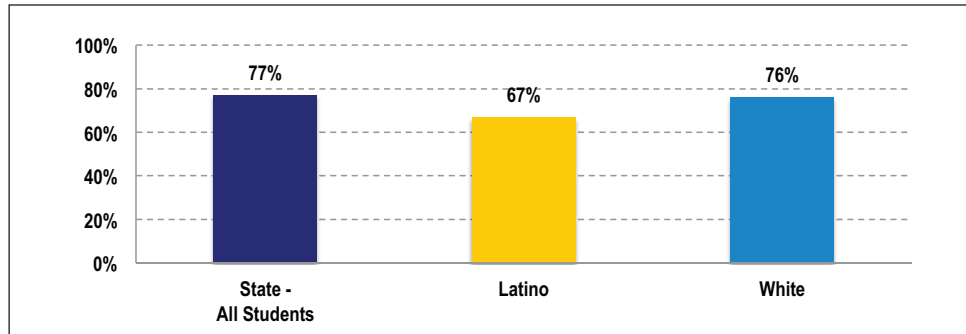
Figure 14: Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate, SY2006-SY2014



Source: MADESE (n.d.). Cohort 2014 Graduation Rates.

## College Enrollment

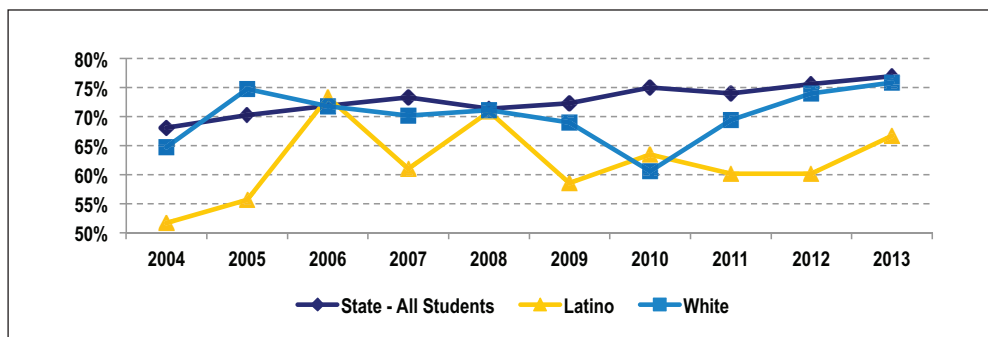
**Figure 15: Percentage of High School Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education within 16 Months of Completing High School, SY2013**



Source: MADESE (n.d.). 2012-13 Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education, All Colleges and Universities.

Among all students in Salem who completed high school in SY2013, 73% enrolled in an institution of higher education within 16 months of completing high school, 4 percentage points lower than the rate for all students statewide. As shown in the figure above, among Latino students in Salem who completed high school in SY2013, 67% enrolled in an institution of higher education within 16 months of completing high school. This was 9 percentage points below the rate for White students in Salem and 10 points below the overall statewide rate. As seen in Figure 16 below, the 67% Latino college enrollment rate is a marked improvement from the 52% rate in SY2004 (though lower than the peak of 73% in SY2006). As a result of this improvement, the gap with White students decreased by 31% and the gap with all students statewide decreased by 38%.

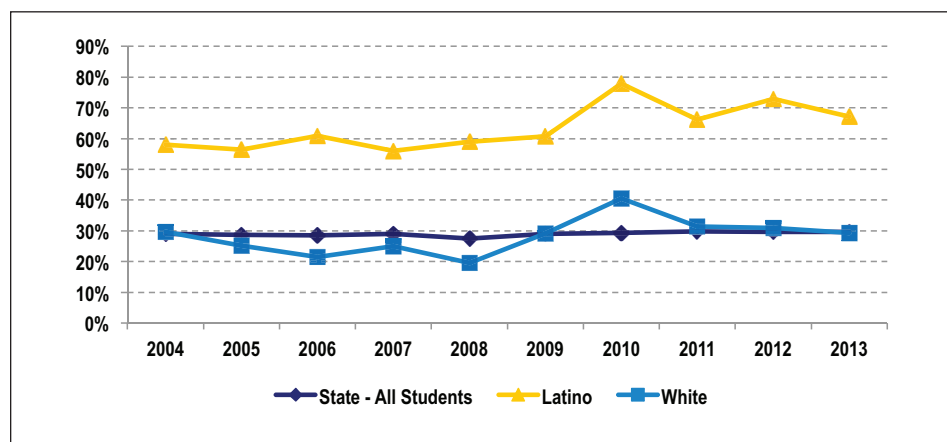
**Figure 16: Percentage of High School Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education within 16 Months of Completing High School, SY2004-SY2013**



Source: MADESE (n.d.). 2012-13 Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education, All Colleges and Universities.

Not only is there a disparity in the proportion of Latino high school graduates who enroll in college, but there are also differences in the types of colleges attended. In SY2013, 67% of the Latino students who enrolled in college did so in a two-year college as compared to 29% of the White college enrollees in Salem and 30% of all college enrollees statewide. As seen in Figure 17 below, since SY2004 the proportion of Latino students enrolling in two-year colleges has increased, remaining substantially higher than the proportion among White college enrollees from Salem and all college enrollees statewide. Community colleges offer great opportunities to students, but completion rates are much lower at two-year colleges than at four-year colleges and universities. According to the Chronicle of Higher Education (2013), only 11% of first-time Latino students at Massachusetts two-year public colleges graduate within three years as compared to the 44% of Latino students at Massachusetts four-year public colleges who graduate within six years.

**Figure 17: Percentage of Students Attending College Enrolling in a Two-Year College, SY2004-SY2013**



Source: MADESE (n.d.). 2012-13 Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education, All Colleges and Universities.

#### Sources

American Community Survey [ACS] (2014). U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey. Salem, MA.

Chronicle of Higher Education (n.d.). *College Completion – Massachusetts Public Colleges*. Retrieved from [http://collegecompletion.chronicle.com/state/#state=ma&sector=public\\_two](http://collegecompletion.chronicle.com/state/#state=ma&sector=public_two)

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The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy conducts research on and for the Latino population in New England. Our goal is to generate the information and analysis necessary to develop more inclusive public policy, and to improve Latino participation in the policy making process. As part of its effort to present vital information about Latinos to diverse audiences, the Gastón Institute has produced this series of demographic and educational profiles for selected cities and towns. Reports can be downloaded from [www.gaston.umb.edu](http://www.gaston.umb.edu).

*Latinos in Public Schools* is a series of reports based on publicly available data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education ([www.profiles.doe.mass.edu](http://www.profiles.doe.mass.edu)). The public school system in Massachusetts reflects the demographic shift in the diversity of the entire population. The total student enrollment has decreased over the past ten years, but during this period the state has witnessed a growing population of Latino students both in terms of overall enrollment and in proportion of total enrollment. Since the SY2006 school year, the number of Latino students in Massachusetts public schools has increased by 36% (from 125,436 to 171,096 students), rep-

resenting a jump from 13% to 18% in the proportion of all students). In contrast, during the same period the number of African-American/Black students has increased by 3%, while the number of White students has decreased by 14%. This growing Latino population in the state is experiencing an achievement gap as compared to White students. They face persistently lower pass rates on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), the state-required standardized tests. In addition, Latino students experience the highest dropout rate and lowest graduation rate as compared to other ethno-racial groups in the state. The growing Latino student population in many Massachusetts school districts presents these districts with a changing configuration of students and with new challenges and opportunities. We hope that this series of reports will be helpful, both to school officials and to the Latino communities of these cities and towns.

### About the Author

Michael Berardino holds an M.S. in Public Policy from the University of Massachusetts Boston and is currently a Research Associate at the Gastón Institute and a doctoral candidate in Public Policy at UMass Boston's McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies. His research focuses on the impacts of language instruction and high-stakes testing policies on English Language Learners, with special attention to Latino student outcomes, school discipline, and civic engagement.